

Ways for you to respond to a stress reaction

- Exercise regularly: walking, cycling, and running are good forms of exercise that help the body deal with stress and tension.
- Eat nutritiously: fruits, vegetables. Limit your caffeine, alcohol and sugar intake.
- Try to keep a regular sleep schedule.
- Structure your time and try to maintain your normal routine. Familiarity and predictability aid in a quicker return to normalcy.
- Spending time with others and talking about similar experiences can be comforting and helpful. Also, being with others who have not experienced similar events can be beneficial to help focus on life outside the incident.
- Do things you enjoy

Ways for family members and friends to respond to your stress reaction

- Listen carefully.
- Spend time with the traumatized person.
- Offer your assistance and a listening ear if they have not asked for help.
- Reassure them that they are safe.
- Help them with daily tasks such as cleaning, cooking, and caring for children and family members.
- Give them some private time.
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally.
- Don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse" - traumatized people are not consoled by those statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and assist them.



CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT

INFORMATIONAL PAMPHLET

Metropolitan Law Enforcement Council
Peer Support Team

Wellesley Police Dept. (MetroLEC)
24/7 Emergency (781)235-1212

What Is A Critical Incident?

Critical incidents are sudden and/or powerful, and extreme situations that can overwhelm those who are exposed to them. What may be considered a critical incident for one person may not be a critical incident for another.

Examples of critical incidents include:

- Line of duty deaths
- Suicide of a colleague
- Serious work related injury
- Mass casualty/disaster/terrorism incident
- High risk events that threaten individuals
- Significant events involving children
- Events where the victim is known to the responder
- Events with excessive media interest
- Prolonged events that end negatively
- Any event that is overwhelming or distressing

Some Common Signs And Symptoms Of a Stress Reaction

Physical / Emotional / Behavioral

Critical incidents can cause stress reactions. These are symptoms that can be physical, mental, emotional and behavioral.

Some examples include:

- Rapid heartbeat
- Elevated blood pressure
- Slowed thinking and reaction
- Trouble problem solving and decision making
- Feeling isolated or lost
- Changes in sleeping or eating patterns
- Irritability, anger, or the inability to rest or relax

Anyone, no matter how healthy, well adjusted, or experienced who is exposed to a critical incident or trauma may have reactions to the event. Studies have found that over 80% of those exposed to a critical incident will have a reaction (not necessarily debilitating) within 24 hours of the event.

Common Myths

There are several myths about critical incidents. All critical incidents and traumatically stressful situations are almost universally stressful to the personnel that encounter them. However, not all critical incidents will impact people the same way. The important thing is to recognize when a critical incident is adversely affecting you.

Everyones stress reaction is the same to critical incidents. Everyone will have different reactions to incidents. Some experience physiological reactions (Heart palpitations, stomach aches, chills/sweats etc.) Others might have a cognitive and emotional response that might include anxiety, depression, difficulty concentrating, insomnia etc. In addition to the different reactions there can be differences in time when the symptoms present. Some may be immediate others delayed (hours, days, or even weeks).

If I have a bad reaction to a critical incident it means I'm not cut out for police work. Many First responders will question their skills, professional competence and performance during a critical incident. According to the National Institute of Justice, 87% of all emergency service workers will experience critical incident stress at least once in their career. You are having a normal reaction to an abnormal situation.